

Attention All Marines: Communicating Logistics Modernization to the Corps

Goodbye beltway lingo. So long project management speak. Adios to endless, unexplained acronyms.

by LtCol Darryl Barnes & William R. Buterbaugh

Plain English. That's where good communications starts. And we're going to need lots of it.

LtGen Richard L. Kelly, Deputy Commandant, Installations and Logistics (I&L), has stated:

Among the many things we've learned from other Marine Corps initiatives is that LogMod [logistics modernization] cannot be successful without extensive and effective communications. It's a critical component in any large-scale change initiative. In fact, most change management experts will tell you that in a program the size, scope, and duration of LogMod, it's very hard to ever overcommunicate.

But at the same time, it is very important that communications be concise, consistent, and easy to understand by our Operating Forces. Where we have missed the mark in the past with these kinds of programs is that we rarely got out of our headquarters mindset to put communications in a language our combatants could relate to and understand.

To this end, the LogMod program took two unprecedented steps (for the Marine Corps) in 2004 to help ensure its communications efforts would be on target. First, using the communications specialists of an out-sourced firm, a comprehensive communications plan was developed to focus first and foremost on reaching our Marines at the tactical level. Second, we built a dedicated communications team comprised of both Marine logisticians and IR Technologies communications professionals to execute the approved plan. These steps set the stage to begin the LogMod communications effort in early 2005.

A Strategic Plan

LogMod communications is not just a bunch of memos, brochures, and pretty pictures on posters. It's a strategic and methodical plan to support the program's change management needs. This means it must contribute to migrating the mindset and behavior of Marines with respect to logistics processes and capabilities over LogMod's multiyear development and implementation.

To deliver this support successfully the communications effort is divided into basic and manageable audience groups, time periods, and messages. Here's the big picture. Our primary audience groups are:

- Strategic audience. Senior officers and LogMod stakeholders responsible for ensuring that the program receives adequate funding

"What I would like to see is a realtime database where we can track parts. Something that's web-based."

—SSgt Leslie A. Ryan, Jr.

and driving its prioritization throughout the Marine Corps.

- Operational audience. Officers, logisticians, and the program team responsible for LogMod's development, training, implementation, and maintenance.

- Tactical audience. Operating Forces/Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) that will adopt and execute the new processes and capabilities provided by LogMod.

At times, our communications bundles these groups together creat-

ing a Corps-wide audience. Regardless of what we do to address the primary audiences, nothing is mutually exclusive. Each targeted communication is created with an understanding of its impact and integration with other primary groups.

There are also many secondary audiences, such as the other Armed Services, Department of Defense (DoD), government agencies and groups, the families of our tactical audience, and the general public.

From a timing perspective, the communications will work to accomplish the following major objectives during the next 3 years:

- 2005—build awareness of and a positive attitude toward the LogMod program and its benefits to the Corps—making the MAGTF more effective. Create a receptive environment for change.
- 2006—support education and training on what roles and responsibilities will change and how. Provide job specifics in preparation for delivery of new operating capabilities.
- 2007—communicate details of implementation timing and needs, accelerate adoption of new processes, and share successes and solutions to initial obstacles.

The last big piece to the LogMod communications plan big picture is key messages. As mentioned earlier, our overarching objective is to reach Marines at the tactical level. To make the necessary connection with these Marines, our communications will al-

ways be in plain English and try to answer their most frequent and important question, "What does LogMod mean to me?"

If we fail to provide the answer—in broad terms at the start and with ever-increasing detail as LogMod progresses—the communications effort will fail. Our messages focus on this issue. Furthermore, in 2005, communications will convey:

- LogMod is an integration of people, processes, and technology.
- LogMod is a Marine Corps pri-



The LogMod poster. (Courtesy I&L Department.)

ority program—even during the current war effort.

- LogMod is a program comprised of many initiatives including—but not only—Global Combat Support System-Marine Corps (GCSS-MC).
- LogMod is making steady progress on many fronts, moving closer to becoming a reality and, in fact, testing some concepts and technologies on today's battlefield. With this strategy in place, we've begun to execute the plan.

New LogMod Web Site, Video, Posters, and Communications Tools

Getting the LogMod messages out quickly, economically, and globally is done best through the program's web site. So redesigning and updating the site is where we began. The redesign and update allowed us to reach all of our primary audience groups at once with new messages and a new look that reflected the program's progressive approach and state-of-the-art capabilities. Relaunched in February, the LogMod site features:

- A moving news ticker that's updated regularly to report LogMod's most recent progress.
- A homepage quote from Gen Michael W. Hagee, Commandant of the Marine Corps, to demonstrate LogMod's support from the top and the urgency to deliver it.
- Changing photos of our warfighters—to include our primary audience and to humanize the program. LogMod is not just processes and technology; it's *people*, processes, and technology.
- Updated content to reflect the current state of LogMod's many initiatives.
- A communications section from which communications tools can be downloaded and used when sharing LogMod information with

other Marines.

Now hosted by the Marine Corps instead of externally, the site <<https://logmod.hqmc.usmc.mil>> will always be a "work-in-progress" effort. It is updated weekly, but changed immediately when merited. We encourage you to visit the site frequently.

Strengthening of the senior officers' and other leadership stakeholders' LogMod understanding, endorsement, and engagement has been an important focus throughout

Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, Navy Information Technology Day, and the National Defense Industrial Association national logistics conference attended by Navy, Army, and Air Force officers, DoD decision-makers, and existing and potential program partners.

Additionally, LogMod articles, such as this series in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, deliver critical information to our strategic audience. LtGen Kelly and BGen Edward Usher, Assistant Deputy Commandant, Logistics Plans, Policies, and Strategic Mobility, serve as the major—but not only—spokespeople for this group.

Among our most critical audiences are those Marines at the operational level. Why? Because they are the frontline for delivering program communications throughout the Corps. The LogMod teams (LMTs) and their colleagues are the "in the field" and "on the ground" voice of LogMod. Their pivotal role in change management includes both sharing LogMod information and *providing feedback* to our communications team on what's working and what's not. (See related article, "Where Have All the FSMAOs Gone?" on p. 34.)

Consequently, we have started communications training efforts with the LMTs and are increasing this effort in the second half of 2005. We will provide the LMTs more web-enabled, electronic, and hardcopy tools, including a LogMod communications and information kit to use with their respective groups to build LogMod awareness.

"Logistics modernization is going to make the Marine Corps a lot more capable and a lot more lethal."

—1stLt Darlan R. Harris

the communications plan early stages. During 2005, LogMod overview briefs and ORACLE/GCSS-MC software capability demonstrations have already been featured at:

- Combat Service Support Element Advocacy Board meetings.
- MAGTF Staff Training Program reviews.
- External meetings, such as

"Logistics modernization cannot wait," says Gen Hagee in our recently released LogMod overview. And communications to our warfighters cannot wait either. The 12-minute video is both launching pad and centerpiece for early LogMod communications to the tactical level. In addition to Gen Hagee, the video features LtGen Kelly and a



The LogMod video case and DVD (digital versatile disc). (Courtesy I&L Department, HQMC.)

cadre of MAGTF Marines (some of whom are quoted in this article) who share the reasons for and the benefits of LogMod. Most importantly, it was created—using animated combat scenarios—to begin demonstrating to the Operating Forces what LogMod will mean to them when fully implemented.

"The Marine Corps has stepped up on the battlefield for the 21st century. It's time to bring the supply system up online as well."

—Sgt Kristian O. Powers

A complementary LogMod poster series was released simultaneously to help reinforce key messages from the video at Marine Corps facilities worldwide. These initial communications targeted to the tactical audience also help drive Marines to the LogMod web site for additional program information. The video and posters are being used by LMTs and the schoolhouses to begin communicating what the future of Marine Corps logistics will be. A second video providing greater detail of GCSS-MC-enabled capabilities is in early production.

Obstacles to Overcome

Looking forward, we know there are significant challenges that must be addressed to ensure success with the LogMod communications effort. The biggest of these are:

- There's a war going on. This

means there are many priorities "on the table" for every Marine. LogMod messages must compete with a multitude of others targeted to Marines working to meet the global war on terrorism's diverse needs. We must ensure that the "voice" of the LogMod priority continues to be heard.

- High turnover of people. Many Marines in jobs today will not be in the same roles—or perhaps not even in the Corps—when LogMod implementation begins. This fact requires that we work closely with schoolhouse efforts to educate new Marines and repeat messages frequently with all audiences.

- A 3-year plan. Communications delivered over an extended period requires strategic timing and creative delivery to sustain interest. This timing and delivery can be achieved, and we are working on developing skillful solutions to this challenge.

As LogMod work continues to accelerate, and change management activities identify other potential barriers to success, we will create appropriate short- and long-term communications strategies to minimize or eliminate their impact.

A Good Start—But We Need You

BGen Usher is quoted as saying:

With nearly two-thirds of 2005 already behind us, logistics modernization has laid the foundation for strong, strategic communications. Equally important is that we have gone far beyond just planning. We've begun delivery of a steady stream of communication tools and tactics that will continue throughout this year and 2006 to support the program's change management activities. We're on track to meet our 2005 communication goals for each primary audience.

Staying on track requires your support. Officers, senior enlisted, and retired Marines alike are influential spokespeople for sharing the importance and progress of LogMod. You, too, are part of our communications strategy.

We want you to help deliver the powerful face-to-face communications that our team alone cannot. This *Gazette* series equips you with the initial information you need to help build awareness of LogMod with every Marine and a receptive environment for its implementation. In plain English: we need you. Welcome to the communications team.



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